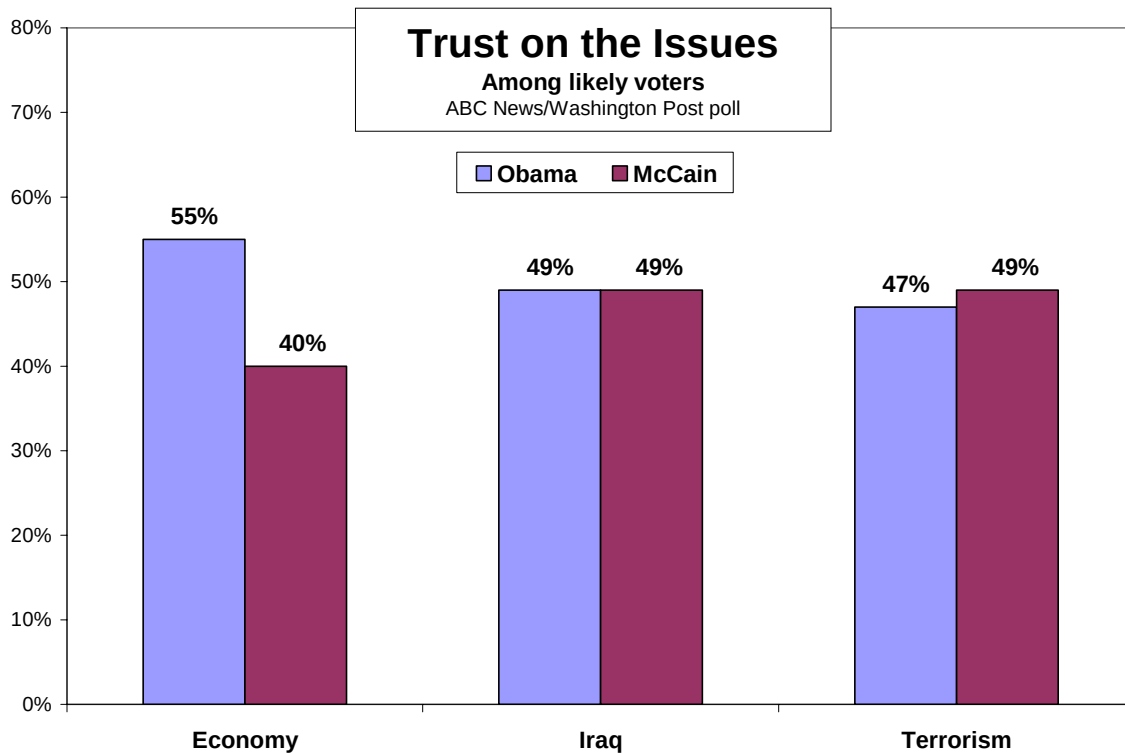


Competitive on Terrorism, Iraq, McCain's Problem is the Subject

John McCain's pushback alternatives against Barack Obama are few but still potentially potent. Among them: Iraq and the war on terrorism.

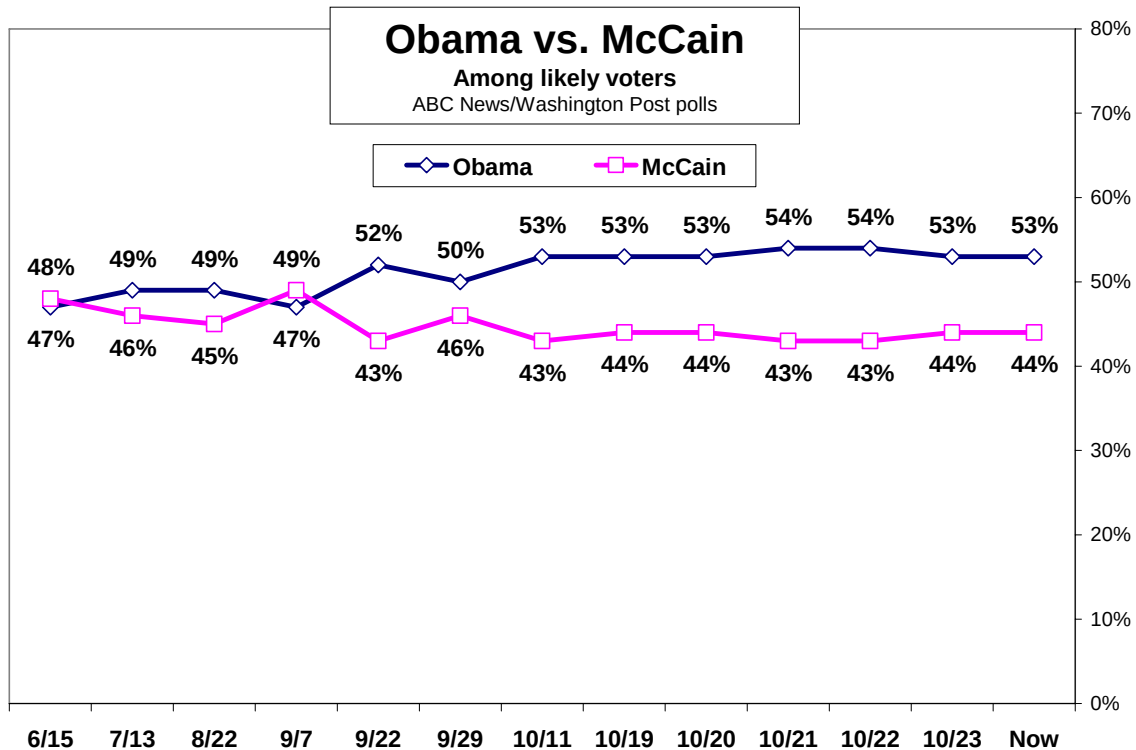
While neither is a clear advantage for McCain, he and Obama run evenly among likely voters in trust to handle the situation in Iraq, despite McCain's support for the unpopular war. They're also about even on terrorism; 49 percent prefer McCain, 47 percent Obama.

McCain's done better on both – a 20-point lead on terrorism, 10 points on Iraq, just after the Republican convention. After trailing Obama steadily for a month, that's the lightning he needs back in his bottle.



McCain's challenge, though, is the economy, the full-force gale blowing through this election. Likely voters have chosen Obama in trust to handle the economy in every ABC News/Washington Post pre-election poll since March, and by 55-40 percent now. Thin soup, but it's McCain's first 40 percent mark on the economy since late September.

The bottom line has been essentially static the past week; Obama holds a 9-point lead among likely voters, 53-44 percent, in this latest ABC/Post tracking poll, based on interviews Tuesday to Friday nights. Obama hasn't dipped below 50 percent, nor McCain above a high of 46 percent, since McCain's best of the year Sept. 7.

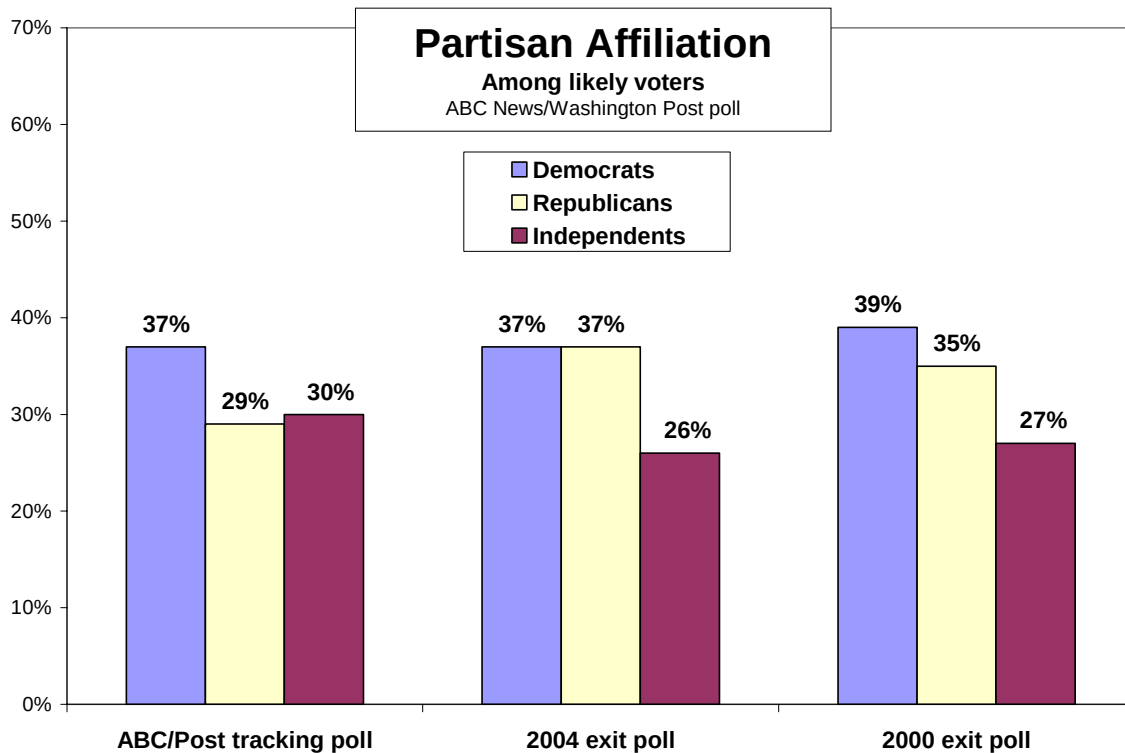


Comparisons to 2004 underscore McCain's challenges. George W. Bush led John Kerry by 12 points in trust to handle terrorism and by 9 points on Iraq. They were about even on the economy – Kerry +3, 48-45 percent – but it was a far less dominant issue.

In 2004 likely voters divided evenly among these three – 22 percent said Iraq was their top issue, 21 percent the economy, 20 percent terrorism. Today 51 percent say it's the economy, 8 percent Iraq, 5 percent terrorism, a vastly changed political environment.

In aggregated data since the start of this tracking poll Oct. 16, McCain has almost unanimous support among likely voters who say terrorism is the single most important issue in their vote – 95-5 percent over Obama; his problem is that there are so few of them. Iraq voters, also few in number, favor Obama by 17 points. Economy voters, the most numerous by far, favor Obama by nearly 30 points, the gist of his support.

PARTY – Obama's lead also rests on the Democratic advantage in intention to vote this year; 37 percent of likely voters are Democrats, 29 percent Republicans. That's unusual; Democrats and Republicans were evenly split in 2004, 37-37 percent, and Democrats outnumbered Republicans by a narrower 4 points in 2000 and 1996 alike.



There's been a shift away from the Republican Party since 2004, as the war in Iraq and George W. Bush turned broadly unpopular. Among all Americans, party identification has gone from 31-31 percent Democratic-Republican on average in 2003 to 36-26 percent on average this year – the same trend reflected now among likely voters.

The rest are independents, classic swing voters. In this latest tracking survey they divide by a very close 49-46 percent, Obama-McCain, indicating again that a good part of Obama's advantage relies on disproportionate intended turnout by Democrats. They back Obama by 91-7 percent; Republicans favor McCain, 88-11 percent.

OTHER GROUPS – Among other groups, Obama enjoys not only 98 percent support among African-Americans, but a 71-28 percent advantage among Hispanics, a group that inched toward the Republicans in 2004 (particularly in Bush's home state of Texas) but then moved back toward their norm in the 2006 midterm elections, when they voted 69-30 percent Democratic in U.S. House contests.

McCain leads by 52-45 percent among whites, but Obama's 45 percent in this group is the best for a Democrat since Jimmy Carter's 47 percent among whites in 1976. The two are even among white women, 49-49 percent, compared with a 17-point McCain lead among more consistently Republican white men.

Obama's support remains best by far among young voters, though there's no age group in which McCain has a clear lead. They split seniors, 49-48 percent, McCain-Obama.

Finally, as noted previously, a surprise group in the tracking poll is non-evangelical or mainstream white Protestants. A usually Republican group, they divide by 52-45 percent, Obama-McCain, countering McCain's big lead among white evangelicals, 73-23 percent, and the 51-46 percent McCain-Obama race among usually swing voting white Catholics.

METHODOLOGY – Interviews for this ABC News/Washington Post tracking poll were conducted by telephone Oct. 21-24, 2008, among a random national sample of 1,321 likely voters, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a 2.5-point error margin for the full sample. Results on questions 6g and 6h were conducted Oct. 22-23 among 661 likely voters; those results have a 4-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

For details on ABC News polls including full questionnaires, methodology and sampling error information, see <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) How closely are you following the presidential race: very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely, or not closely at all?

	---- Closely ----			---- Not closely ----			No
	NET	Very	Smwt.	NET	Not too	At all	opinion
10/24/08 RV	89	60	28	11	6	5	*

Call for full trend.

2. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) I'd like you to rate the chances that you will vote in the presidential election in November: Are you absolutely certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances 50-50, or less than that?

	Certain to vote	Probably vote	Chances 50/50	Less than that	Don't think will vote (vol.)	Already voted (vol.)	No op.
10/24/08 RV	79	5	5	2	1	8	*

Call for full trend.

2a. (ASKED IF CERTAIN IN Q2) Do you think you'll (vote in person at your polling place on Election Day), or (vote before Election Day by early voting or mail-in ballot)?

	Vote in person	Early voting/ mail-in ballot	Already voted (vol.)	No opinion
10/24/08 RV	76	21	2	1

Call for full trend.

3. (ASKED OF REGISTERED VOTERS) If the 2008 presidential election were being held today and the candidates were (Barack Obama and Joe Biden, the Democrats) and (John McCain and Sarah Palin, the Republicans), for whom would you vote? (ASKED IF ALREADY VOTED) For whom did you vote?

NET LEANED VOTE - LIKELY VOTERS

	Obama	McCain	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/24/08	53	44	1	1	2
10/23/08	53	44	*	1	2
10/22/08	54	43	1	1	2
10/21/08	54	43	1	1	1
10/20/08	53	44	1	1	1
10/19/08	53	44	1	1	2
10/11/08	53	43	1	1	2
9/29/08	50	46	*	2	2
9/22/08	52	43	*	1	3
9/7/08	47	49	1	1	3
8/22/08	49	45	*	2	4
7/13/08	49	46	1	2	2
6/15/08	47	48	1	2	2

NET LEANED VOTE - REGISTERED VOTERS

	Obama	McCain	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	Would not vote (vol.)	No opinion
10/24/08	52	42	1	2	*	3
10/23/08	52	42	1	1	1	3
10/22/08	54	41	1	2	1	3
10/21/08	53	41	1	1	1	3
10/20/08	52	42	1	1	1	3
10/19/08	52	42	1	1	1	3
10/11/08	54	41	1	2	*	2
9/29/08	49	45	1	2	*	3
9/22/08	52	42	1	1	*	4
9/7/08	47	46	1	1	1	4
8/22/08	49	43	*	3	2	3
7/13/08	50	42	1	3	1	2
6/15/08	49	45	1	3	1	3
5/11/08	51	44	*	2	1	1
4/13/08	49	44	*	3	3	2
3/2/08	53	40	*	2	1	3
2/1/08	47	48	1	1	1	2
1/19/07	47	45	*	3	1	4

3b. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS IF NAMED CANDIDATE) Would you definitely vote for (CANDIDATE), or is there a chance you could change your mind and vote for someone else? (IF CHANCE CHANGE MIND) Is there a GOOD CHANCE you'll change your mind, or would you say it's PRETTY UNLIKELY?

	Definitely vote for	-Chance change mind - NET	Good	Unlikely	No opinion
10/24/08 LV	91	9	4	5	1
10/23/08 LV	91	9	4	5	1
10/22/08 LV	90	9	4	5	1
10/21/08 LV	89	10	5	5	1
10/20/08 LV	89	10	4	6	1
10/19/08 LV	88	10	5	6	1
10/11/08 LV	88	11	4	7	1
9/29/08 RV	82	17	8	9	1
9/22/08 RV	83	16	8	8	1

9/7/08	RV	79	20	8	12	1
8/22/08	RV	73	24	11	13	3
7/13/08	RV	72	25	10	15	3
6/15/08	RV	72	26	11	16	2
5/11/08	RV	69	28	15	14	3
9/26/04	RV	82	16	4	12	2
9/8/04	RV	84	14	6	8	2
8/29/04	RV	81	18	7	11	1
8/1/04	RV	80	19	7	12	1
7/25/04	RV	78	20	7	13	2
7/11/04	RV	79	21	7	13	1
6/20/04	RV	73	26	12	14	*

Barack Obama:

		Definitely vote for	-Chance NET	change Good	mind - Unlikely	No opinion
10/24/08	LV	92	7	3	4	*
10/23/08	LV	91	8	4	4	1
10/22/08	LV	90	8	3	5	1
10/21/08	LV	89	9	4	6	1
10/20/08	LV	90	9	3	6	1
10/19/08	LV	91	9	3	5	1
10/11/08	LV	90	9	3	6	1
9/29/08	RV	83	16	7	9	1
9/22/08	RV	85	14	8	7	1
9/7/08	RV	78	21	9	12	1
8/22/08	RV	74	23	7	15	4
7/13/08	RV	72	23	9	14	5
6/15/08	RV	71	26	7	19	3
5/11/08	RV	71	25	13	13	4

John McCain:

		Definitely vote for	-Chance NET	change Good	mind - Unlikely	No opinion
10/24/08	LV	89	10	4	6	1
10/23/08	LV	90	10	4	5	1
10/22/08	LV	90	9	4	5	1
10/21/08	LV	89	11	5	5	1
10/20/08	LV	89	11	5	5	1
10/19/08	LV	86	12	6	6	1
10/11/08	LV	86	14	4	9	*
9/29/08	RV	81	18	9	9	1
9/22/08	RV	81	18	9	9	2
9/7/08	RV	80	19	8	11	2
8/22/08	RV	72	25	14	11	2
7/13/08	RV	71	28	12	17	1
6/15/08	RV	72	27	14	12	1
5/11/08	RV	66	32	17	15	2

4. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Have you voted for president in any year before this 2008 election, or is this the first year you'll be voting for president?

		Voted before	First time	No opinion
10/24/08	LV	88	12	0
10/23/08	LV	87	13	*
10/22/08	LV	87	13	*
10/21/08	LV	87	12	*
10/20/08	LV	88	11	*
10/19/08	LV	89	11	*
10/11/08	LV	90	10	0

9/29/08*	RV	92	8	*
9/22/08	RV	92	8	0

10/31/04	RV	90	10	*
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*9/29/08 and previous: "(Was this/will this be) the first time you've voted in a presidential election, or have you voted in previous presidential elections?"

29 held for release.

5. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) What [was/is] the SINGLE most important issue in your choice for president: (The economy), (the war in Iraq), (terrorism), (energy policy), (health care), or something else?

		Economy	Iraq	Terrorism	Energy policy	Health care	Something else	No op.
10/24/08	LV	51	8	5	4	11	19	1
10/23/08	LV	51	8	5	4	10	21	1
10/22/08	LV	51	8	5	4	10	20	1
10/21/08	LV	51	9	5	4	10	20	1
10/20/08	LV	52	8	6	5	9	19	1
10/19/08	LV	53	7	6	4	9	19	2

Compare to 2004:

What (was/will be) the single most important issue in your vote for president this year: (The U.S. campaign against terrorism), (the war in Iraq), (the economy and jobs), (education), (health care), or something else?

		Terrorism	Iraq	Economy/jobs	Education	Health care	Other	No op.
10/31/04	LV	20	22	21	5	9	21	3

6. (ASKED OF LIKELY VOTERS) Regardless of who you may support, who do you trust more to handle [ITEM] - (Obama) or (McCain)?

a. The economy

		Obama	McCain	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/24/08	LV	55	40	1	2	2
10/23/08	LV	56	39	1	2	2
10/22/08	LV	56	38	1	3	2
10/21/08	LV	55	38	1	4	2
10/20/08	LV	55	38	1	4	2
10/19/08	LV	55	39	1	4	1
10/11/08	LV	54	37	1	6	2
9/29/08	RV	50	43	1	3	2
9/22/08	RV	53	39	1	4	3
9/7/08	RV	47	42	1	4	6
8/22/08	RV	50	39	2	5	4
7/13/08	RV	54	37	2	6	3
6/15/08	RV	52	37	2	5	4
5/11/08	RV	48	38	2	8	4
3/2/08	RV	50	37	2	6	5

Compare to:

		Kerry	Bush	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/30/04	LV	48	45	1	3	3

g. The war in Iraq

10/23/08	LV	49	49	*	1	*
10/11/08	LV	48	48	1	4	1
9/29/08	RV	45	50	1	3	1
9/22/08	RV	49	45	*	4	3
9/7/08	RV	41	51	1	2	4
8/22/08	RV	46	46	1	4	3
7/13/08	RV	44	49	1	3	3
6/15/08	RV	45	48	*	3	3
5/11/08	RV	46	46	1	5	3
3/2/08	RV	44	48	*	4	4

Compare to:

		Kerry	Bush	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/30/04	LV	41	50	1	4	4

h. The U.S. campaign against terrorism

10/23/08	LV	47	49	1	2	1
10/11/08	LV	47	47	2	2	2
9/29/08	RV	44	52	1	2	2
9/22/08	RV	44	48	1	3	4
9/7/08	RV	36	56	2	2	4
8/22/08	RV	38	52	3	5	2
7/13/08	RV	39	54	2	3	1
6/15/08	RV	37	57	2	2	3
5/11/08	RV	33	55	5	4	3
3/2/08	RV	32	57	1	3	5

Compare to:

		Kerry	Bush	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
10/30/04	LV	40	52	1	3	4

8. (ASKED OF LIKELY LEANED OBAMA/MCCAIN SUPPORTERS) Thinking about his candidacy for president so far, how enthusiastic are you about [NAME] - very enthusiastic, fairly enthusiastic, not too enthusiastic, or not enthusiastic at all?

10/24/08 - Summary Table - Among Likely Leaned Obama/McCain Supporters

	--- Enthusiastic ---			---- Not enthusiastic ----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	
a. Obama	97	71	26	3	3	1	0
b. McCain	88	39	49	11	9	2	1

Trend:

a. Obama

		--- Enthusiastic ---			---- Not enthusiastic ----			No opinion
		NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	
10/24/08	LV	97	71	26	3	3	1	0
10/23/08	LV	95	70	25	5	4	1	0
10/22/08	LV	94	67	28	5	5	1	*
10/21/08	LV	95	64	31	5	4	1	*
10/20/08	LV	95	65	31	5	4	1	*
10/19/08	LV	96	64	32	4	3	1	*
10/11/08	LV	96	66	30	4	3	1	*

9/29/08	RV	95	61	34	4	4	*	1
9/22/08	RV	94	62	32	6	4	1	*
9/7/08	RV	96	64	32	4	3	1	0
8/22/08	RV	95	52	43	5	2	3	*
6/15/08	RV	91	52	39	9	7	2	*

b. McCain

10/24/08	LV	88	39	49	11	9	2	1
10/23/08	LV	89	39	50	10	8	2	1
10/22/08	LV	88	40	48	12	10	2	1
10/21/08	LV	88	37	51	11	10	1	*
10/20/08	LV	88	38	50	12	11	2	*
10/19/08	LV	87	40	47	13	11	2	*
10/11/08	LV	87	31	57	13	10	2	0
9/29/08	RV	90	38	52	10	7	2	*
9/22/08	RV	89	34	55	10	8	2	1
9/7/08	RV	92	46	46	8	6	2	0
8/22/08	RV	86	28	58	13	11	2	1
6/15/08	RV	74	19	55	25	19	6	1

Compare to:

10/26/04 - Summary Table - Among Likely Voters, Leaned Bush/Kerry Supporters

	--- Enthusiastic --			---- Not Enthusiastic ----			No
	NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	opinion
a. Bush	91	55	36	9	8	1	*
b. Kerry	92	46	47	7	6	1	1

4/2/00 - Summary Table - Among Likely Voters, Leaned Bush/Gore Supporters

	--- Enthusiastic --			---- Not Enthusiastic ----			No
	NET	Very	Fairly	NET	Not too	Not at all	opinion
a. Gore	84	41	43	17	12	5	0
b. Bush	87	44	43	14	12	2	0

END